

Commitment to Quality Early Childhood Education

Swedish approaches

"...Sweden did not get where they are today without 15-20 years of persistent effort, so we should not get discouraged at home, but rather keep on with our work to create a true early care and education system by continuing our support of our teachers and [our efforts to] help policy makers see how crucial public support is."

Study Program Team Member

"Consistently high standards for children's education-al and social services characterize public policy and daily practice throughout the Nordic region" (Wagner, 2004).

As part of its social, economic and education policies, Sweden has consistently invested in families and their young children, in partnership with schools, businesses and communities.

- Consistent and increasing investments are provided by the government to support the provision of preschool services.
- Parenthood is supported by both government and business through part time working options, job retention and reduced salary supplements.
- Programs are designed to be responsive to and supportive of family needs, with family involvement as a thoroughly integrated feature.
- All families are eligible to use preschool services — including parents who are unemployed, pursuing a college education or on parental leave.
- The government regularly monitors preschool use to inform adjustments in its investments in research, space, subsidy and staff at the local level to plan and provide services.

How might these ideas be translated to North Carolina?

- **Unify funding streams to improve effectiveness, reach and scope of services.**

Consider blending resources and regionalizing functions to reduce administration costs and increase the provision of family-centered vs. geographically-oriented services.

- **Link all early care and education services to standards and guidelines.** Consider the use a common framework such as *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers*, www.ncpublicschools.org/success/downloads/foundations.pdf to develop funding formulas, build common goals and target professional development across systems and agencies.
- **Develop a set of common data collection tools.** Work with early education and care funding sources and research arms to develop comprehensive data collection instruments to allow for long term, holistic, assessment of needs and resources.
- **Increase awareness of how businesses can partner to support families.** Leverage economic, workforce and job creation studies to build supports for parents with young children who work in NC's largest employment base — small and mid-size businesses.